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ABSTRACT

The need for employment training delivery systems to work cooperatively in preparing a trained work force is described. A brief review of the literature lists seven major employment training delivery systems which operate independently of each other; discusses the problems associated with their lack of cooperation; and argues that cooperation among these systems is essential at this time. The delivery systems listed are: the military, the Job Training Partnership Act, business and industry, apprenticeship, universities, public vocational education, and proprietary or independent schools. Five major principles which should be incorporated into cooperative programs are presented along with examples of procedures for achieving each principle. The principles, which were identified by a questionnaire survey of representatives of the seven major delivery systems, are: (1) reduce competition and encourage cooperation among the providers of employment training; (2) ensure the quality and relevance of employment training; (3) ensure that employment training programs are accessible and available; (4) increase the efficiency of employment training; and (5) ensure ongoing planning and evaluation of the employment training system and its components. (DC)

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PLANNING FOR IMPROVED LINKAGES

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Preparing a trained work force for our nation has been the charge of several employment training delivery systems. This charge has become increasingly difficult to fulfill in recent years. Changes in the nature and types of jobs performed and overall changes in the nation's economic climate have placed serious strains on employment delivery systems' ability to prepare qualified workers. Bottoms and Copa (1983) suggest that today's crisis in the workplace calls for changes in education as dramatic as the changes that Sputnik ushered in a quarter century ago. Bridging the gap between the skills of today's work force and future demands of business and industry represents a formidable challenge to deliverers of employment training.

Employment training can be defined as a system which teaches people about work and prepares people for work. Evans (1982) identifies seven major systems which provide employment training in the United States: (1) military, (2) Job Training Partnership Act (J.T.P.A.) (formerly CETA), (3) business and industry, (4) apprenticeship, (5) universities, (6) public vocational education (secondary and community college levels), and (7) proprietary or independent schools. There are, of course, other systems or deliverers of employment training. For example, correctional institutions provide training of varying types and amounts. Also, many employees are trained in home environments. These seven systems, however, comprise the major training effort.

The employment training system in America has been described as a "non-system"--a mixture of separate delivery mechanisms as varied as the needs that created them. Carnevale (1983) points out that while this non-system is often lauded for its inherent flexibility to respond to local needs and changing economic and social conditions, it is also criticized for its inefficiency and ineffectiveness. One means of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the employment training system is through collaborative efforts among the providers of employment training. Santos (1983) suggests that the day is gone when each system can operate in isolation from the others. The pool of individuals who need training is growing, placing a strain on the resources available for training. Therefore, collaborative efforts which make the most of every available resource are likely to flourish in the next decade.

A plan which would cause collaboration, cooperation, and coordination among these employment training delivery systems has been desired for over a decade and has been discussed for at least that long. A position statement of the National Association of State Directors of Vocational Education (1980) indicated that the "responsibility of economic development, productivity, and efficiency is shared by vocational educators, employers, employees, community agencies, and government." In addition, it is the particular responsibility of vocational education "to ensure that the necessary connections exist between education and training and the workplace and to make instruction accessible at the time and places it is most needed."

There are a number of reasons why such a plan is not only desirable but essential at this time: the need for revitalization of American industry, the expected shortage of young workers, the persistence of unemployment and low earnings among minority and handicapped persons, the influx of immigrants, the pace of technological change, the military man power challenge, and the reduction of resources allocated to public sector employment training.

One of the major obstacles in the development of a plan for collaboration, cooperation, and coordination among employment training delivery systems has been that regional and local differences make apparently successful plans in one locale unworkable or nontransferable to others. Whether the reasons for this are perceived or real makes little difference. To overcome these barriers, it was determined to be necessary to identify those elements, practices and procedures which are agreed to be essential to the operation of each delivery system and which are not likely to be altered much as a result of changing political winds and the passage of time. In other words, components identified as being long-term, stable, essential, and common across regions could then serve as guiding principles for the development of state or local cooperation/collaboration plans.

The following principles were developed as a part of the project, "A Study of Cooperation/Collaboration Among Employment Training Systems in Illinois." Information was collected through a review of related literature, a mailed questionnaire to representatives of the seven major delivery systems of employment training, and personal interviews with local and state representatives of the systems. From this information, five major principles were identified. In addition, examples of procedures for achieving each principle are provided.

I. REDUCE COMPETITION AND ENCOURAGE COOPERATION AMONG THE PROVIDERS OF EMPLOYMENT TRAINING.

A. Improve communication among delivery systems through mechanisms such as joint committees, newsletters, and personal contacts.

B. Initiate regional planning of employment training efforts.

C. Utilize formal cooperation arrangements such as contracts and joint agreements.

D. Provide incentives to cooperate in the form of funding or priority given to proposals developed around cooperative activities.

II. ENSURE THE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF EMPLOYMENT TRAINING.

A. Provide training content that is based on the expressed needs of employers and work force projections.

B. Utilize effective and appropriate training methods.

C. Monitor participants' employment training and job performance.

D. Maintain a high quality of trainer performance by effectively recruiting and selecting trainers and by providing an opportunity for them to upgrade their employment training skills.

III. ENSURE THAT EMPLOYMENT TRAINING PROGRAMS ARE ACCESSIBLE AND AVAILABLE.

A. Establish procedures whereby the needs of individuals can be matched with the appropriate delivery system through guidance activities such as testing and career counseling.

B. Provide an opportunity to ensure an individual's readiness to enter particular employment training systems through such services as remedial education and support services.

C. Maximize participation in employment training by offering training which is affordable and flexible in terms of time and geographic accessibility.

IV. INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY OF EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

A. Reduce duplication of efforts in providing employment training by decreasing competition and encouraging cooperation.

B. Encourage the timeliness of training through a flexible system to initiate, phase-out, and fund training programs.

V. ENSURE ONGOING PLANNING AND EVALUATION OF THE EMPLOYMENT TRAINING SYSTEM AND ITS COMPONENTS.

A. Utilize forecasting and evaluation data to plan for the renewal and updating of the employment training system.

B. Evaluate the effectiveness of the employment training system and its components both internally (self-assessment) and externally.

Conclusion

Cooperation and coordination among the major employment training delivery systems are essential in order to avoid duplication and to make training opportunities available to all workers. Although the principles presented can provide the framework for the development of coordination plans, they are subject to regional, state, and local interpretation and implementation. Thus, while plans should incorporate the broad principles, there is a need for policy guidelines for the practical implementation of such plans. Our next speaker will address this issue.

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